



THE
JEWISH
GAILY

FORWARD

MAY 1983

שער זהב

IYAR / SIVAN 5743

President's Column

THE SUBJECT OF THIS COLUMN is our Congregational meeting on Sunday, May 15. It is, I suppose, no great surprise to you that the May issue of the *Forward* should carry such a story. I thought I would have to come up with all sorts of creative and coy slogans, arguments and entreaties which would present this very predictable May subject in a fresh light. What I finally realized is that it just ain't so. The Congregational meeting need not be touted with clever copy, for it is an event in the life of our Congregation that is sufficiently important in its own right to be presented with naked simplicity. Indeed, to skirt the basic issue is unnecessarily defensive, and there really is no reason to be defensive: it is a very important meeting which all members should attend for the purpose of meeting each other and, together, setting the Congregation's direction.

I have always resisted being a "noodger." But there is a difference between "noodging" and inviting; and there's a difference between cajoling and honestly stating to someone that he or she is needed.

I am telling you that your physical presence and emotional and intellectual contributions are needed by Sha'ar Zahav at our Congregational meeting. As I've said before if you've read this far, you're involved—the only question is how involved.

I'm not asking you to do more now than you want to do; just know that attending the Congregational meeting is an important thing to do—and also a lot of fun. It is important because we have almost unlimited choice in terms of the directions in which we can move and only *you* know what you think the group should do. Nobody can speak for you or cast your vote. I hope you will choose to make this Congregation your own by joining us on May 15 at 201 Casselli, corner of Danvers, at The Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints, at 3 p.m. We hope you are able to share your views and concerns with us so we can talk and get to know each other better.

Passover was a wonderful holiday for Sha'ar Zahav because we enjoyed the Seder together and really celebrated the freedom which this holiday is all about. To Leslie Bergson and Garry Koenigsberg we all owe a "thank you" and praise for a job extraordinarily well done.

Also thanks to Paul Cohen and Shelley Spiro, coordinators of the Seder, and to Susan Greenspan, who handled all aspects of registration. Thanks are also due to Lenny Brill and Steve Elman, who provided recipes for the occasion; Aaron Cooper, who handled the wine order and delivery; Eric Keitel, who organized the greeting table and made everyone feel very welcome.

As ever, special thanks go to Walter Leiss, whose generosity and warmth once again prompted him to provide the beautiful flowers which graced our Seder room.

The ritual committee members who led us in prayer and set the religious tone for the evening—thanks to Garry Koenigsberg, Leslie Bergson, Daniel Chesir, Ellyn Bloomfield and Peter Hayn. And thanks to all who participated in readings and song. The beautiful and moving ritual tradition of this holiday was captured in a most fitting manner.

Again, thanks to all of these people on behalf of the Congregation as a whole and especially from those who were there to participate in and share this night which is different from all other nights.

Not Just Elections At Congregational Meeting

The Congregational meeting and annual elections, scheduled for 3 p.m. Sunday, May 15 at 201 Caselli Street, corner of Danvers, (the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints), is our primary opportunity for us to come together and conduct "family" business. It is a most effective way to make known our wishes, hopes and plans. It affords all of us the chance to share ideas, develop and clarify goals, and to strengthen our "family" ties.

In addition to elections, there will be reports from our president, treasurer, and the committees. A very important report will be presented by the Building Committee concerning "a home of our own," and by-laws changes will be considered. Please plan to be there and voice your ideas.

In keeping with Congregation Sha'ar Zahav tradition, we will also have a good time together! See you there.

The Meaning of Lag Ba-Omer

THE FESTIVAL OF LAG BA-OMER falls on the 33rd day of the Counting of the Omer (the 18th day of the month of Iyar), a seven-week period of semi-mourning, which begins on the second day of Passover and ends with Shavuot. On Lag Ba-Omer, the mourning is lifted and activities otherwise prohibited during the Omer, such as haircuts and weddings, are permitted. (When I was living on an Israeli kibbutz, no fewer than a dozen couples were married that day, and I was running from chupa to chupa taking pictures for them all.)

The reason for the institution of Lag Ba-Omer is obscure. A talmudic passage (Yev. 62b) telling of the plague which killed 24,000 disciples of Rabbi Akiva during the Omer period provides a rationale for the mourning observed during the period and is taken as a reference to the disasters of the Bar Kochba war. According to another view, the day was selected because only 32 of the 49 days of the Omer period are days of mourning; the 33rd day therefore marks the lifting of the ban.

Another tradition has it that the great flood commenced on this day and, in the time of Moses, manna began to fall from heaven. A later tradition established the date as the day of the death of Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai, to whom the Zohar is attributed, even though it was written twelve centuries after his death; hence it is celebrated particularly by Kabbalists. Rabbi Simeon's burial place, Meron in Galilee, has remained the scene of a picturesque Lag Ba-Omer ceremony.

Each year on this day Hasidim and others bring their young children for their first haircut and light bonfires and dance through the night. Some credence has been given to the notion that the tradition of Lag Ba-Omer bonfires is related to the ancient Celtic and Swedish customs of lighting May Day bonfires to frighten demons and witches away.

The Jewish Gaily Forward is published 12 times annually by Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, PO Box 5640, San Francisco, California 94101, (415) 921-7612. Permission to reproduce non-copyrighted material is freely given; credit would be appreciated.

All newsletter copy should be typed, double-spaced and is due on the 10th of the month. It should be sent to the Synagogue office, marked to the attention of the *Forward*.

Members of the Newsletter Committee are Larry Chandler, Alex Ingersoll and Leila Raim (editorial and production), Bart Benderoff, Chuck Norton, Alan Schrager and Barry Siegel (distribution).

The display advertising rate is \$10 per column inch with a frequency discount of 10% for six or more insertions. The advertising deadline is the 10th of the month. Ads should be camera ready. Any advertising that requires typesetting, camera and/or artwork is subject to a one-time production charge. Payment must accompany order and should be sent to the Synagogue Office, marked attention *Forward* advertising. For more information on advertising rates and charges, call the Synagogue Office 921-7612.

In most recent practice among American Jews, Lag Ba-Omer is a day for hikes in the woods, picnics, and other playful activities. In the modern American Jewish tradition, members and friends of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav expect to greatly enjoy ourselves this Lag Ba-Omer. It falls on May 1, and we will be celebrating with our spectacular picnic and softball game. We hope many of you will be there to eat, play, kibbitz, cheerlead, and generally "Hoolyie."

—Leila Raim

Women's Havurah Sets Goals

THE WOMAN'S HAVURAH's last event, held March 13 at Noble Pies, focused on ways to increase the involvement of women in the Congregation. The questions we addressed were (1) What would we like to see women do in Sha'ar Zahav; (2) What will it take to increase women's participation; and (3) What have we gotten out of our present involvement and events we have attended.

We identified our reasons for joining Congregation Sha'ar Zahav as the increasing awareness of ourselves as Jews; the need to be together with other lesbians and other Jews; the feeling of being "family;" and the emphasis we found at Congregation Sha'ar Zahav on personal freedom and the right of gay people to pray together.

We recognize that women are not as active in the Congregation as they might be. There are warm feelings of family and closeness, but conflicts and ambivalence remain. Many of the women have expressed feelings of not being needed or wanted (as did some men at the women-led service), but the group felt this was largely a result of misunderstandings. Additionally, women often feel hesitant or fearful of not being accepted because of their lack of knowledge of ritual and the formal workings of a congregation.

To focus on the future, we identified the following means of increasing the participation of women in the Congregation: (1) integrate newcomers more fully to foster a sense of belonging—committee work is seen as very helpful to this process; (2) achieve a balance between the religious and social/cultural activities, such as strengthening the social functions of Onegs; (3) achieve equal participation by women in the Congregation's religious life by providing and promoting ritual education; and (4) conduct outreach programs to attract more women to our Congregation.

For the women of our Congregation, the Women's Havurah provides us with vital support and understanding; a sense of closeness and family; sisterhood... in the words of one of our members, "It's very appealing."

—Joyce Amburgey, Cindy Schorr, Shelley Spiro

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Va'ad Report

A REVISION of the Congregation's membership dues structure was presented by the Finance Committee at April's Va'ad meeting. The revised structure reduces the dues assessment at most income levels, while retaining \$60 as the beginning of the scale. The Finance Committee reasoned that the current structure appears to prohibit newcomers at mid- to high-income levels from joining the Congregation because the dues seem too high, especially for newcomers. The expectation is that lower dues will encourage these people to join, and result in increased overall revenues. As mandated by the by-laws, the dues proposal will be brought before the entire membership for discussion and approval at the May 15 Congregational meeting.

The May 15 agenda also includes a number of by-laws revisions, which received Va'ad approval in April. Revisions concern the procedures for placing names on the ballot in the annual elections of officers, the removal of Va'ad members, and several other issues. (Congregation members should have already received a copy of these by-laws changes for examination prior to the May 15 meeting.)

In other Va'ad business, an announcement was made that The Bay Area Council on Soviet Jewry is developing a plan for daily half-hour protest vigils outside the offices of the Soviet Consulate. The plan calls for each local Jewish organization to conduct the vigil once each month. The Congregation's Social Action Committee will coordinate involvement in this project.

The Va'ad gave approval to the Executive Committee's recommendation to establish a committee to oversee and allocate monies out of the Phooey on AIDS Fund. There was general agreement that this fund should be used only for the direct benefit of and assistance to Congregational members suffering from AIDS, rather than community-wide projects of a general nature.

The Va'ad meeting also included an update from the Building Committee on the continuing negotiations for the property at Caselli and Danvers in Upper Market. The Committee hopes to bring a report of full and final negotiations to the May 15 Congregational meeting.

Va'ad meetings are held at 6 p.m. on the second Monday of each month. Members of the Congregation are encouraged to attend. Please call the Synagogue office (921-7612) for the location.

Election Information

Members are reminded that candidates' nights will be held on Friday, May 6 and May 13, prior to the annual Congregational Meeting and election on Sunday, May 15, at 3 p.m. Members should please note that the location of this meeting will be at the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints, 201 Caselli Street (corner of Danvers).

The candidates for election are: *President*, Mike Rankin; *Vice President*, no candidate; *Recorder*, Eric Keitel; *Treasurer*, David Stein; *Va'ad Members-at-Large*, Alan Berenstein, Mark Feldman, Peter V. Hayn, Ron Lezell, Nancy Meyer.

The Ultimate Mitzva

Urgent Appeal to Women: Donate Blood Now!

OUR CONGREGATION has been greatly affected by the spreading AIDS diseases and some of our brothers are very sick. Blood is needed and the new regulations and the blood banks qualify very few gay men as donors. In the spirit of family, mishpochah and community it is incumbent upon those women of Sha'ar Zahav and their friends who are able to donate blood to do so.

On Saturday, May 14, the Irwin Memorial Blood Bank has been reserved from 10 a.m. to 12 noon for a Sha'ar Zahav Blood Bank Drive sponsored by the Women's Havurah. The process is simple and painless and the total amount of time needed is merely half an hour. Cookies, donuts and fruit juice will be provided by the blood bank. Relaxing environmental music with your own personal walkperson will be issued by two Sha'ar Zahav candystripers! Please leave your name and phone number at the synagogue office, 921-7612, if you plan to donate on the 14th, and meet us at the blood bank, 270 Masonic Avenue (at Turk) between 10 a.m. and noon. If you cannot donate on that date please call Irwin for an appointment at another time and name the Congregation as the recipient of your donation. We are proud of being one of the few organizations in the city to have our own blood bank along with a Phooey on AIDS Fund. Our commitment is strong to take care of our own. The need for lesbians and gay men to join together has never been stronger and we ask that you spend 30 minutes of your time giving a most precious gift.

—The Women's Havurah

Vigils In Support Of Soviet Jewry

The Bay Area Council on Soviet Jewry has asked our Congregation for assistance in a most important function: daily vigils at the Soviet Consulate in San Francisco to be held in support of Soviet Jews.

The Social Action Committee is attempting to organize a group of volunteers for the purpose. Our group will be responsible for marching one day a month, between 11:30 a.m. and noon. There will be media coverage to enhance our impact.

We ask each of you to consider participating in this effort. Please call the synagogue office at 921-7612 to express your willingness to help.

Summer Fun

The Social Program Committee will convene on Monday, May 23 at 7:30 p.m. to plan ways for the Congregation to enjoy the upcoming months in the Bay Area. The meeting itself should be the first of many enjoyable events in Sha'ar Zahav's summer schedule. All interested members and friends are invited to attend this planning session at Ron Lezell's home at 664 Hayes St., in San Francisco. Call Ron at 621-3930 or the Synagogue Office for further information.

The Meaning of Shavuot

SHAVUOT, also called the Feast of Weeks because it occurs on the completion of the seven weeks of the Counting of the Omer, is the only one of the great festivals for which the Torah gives us no historical-political connections, but only mentions the natural and agricultural cycle. Later tradition, however, identifies it as the anniversary of God's giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Like the two other Pilgrim Festivals (Passover and Tabernacles) it has agricultural significance—it is the festival celebrating the conclusion of the grain harvest (hag ha-katzir "The Harvest Festival").

When the Temple stood, there were two special aspects of the sacrifices for Shavuot: every family publicly avowed its share in the history of the people by making a free-will offering according to their means, and the priests presented a special wave offering—two loaves of bread made of wheat, the first products of the spring wheat harvest. There is a special twist in this celebration of growth. The two loaves are unusual, for they are explicitly the product of human labor. Not grain or sheep or anything else straight from God's hand, but bread, made by the labor of people using the gifts of God.

So Shavuot celebrates the partnership of human beings with God in giving food to the world. Having received from God the rain, seed, and sunshine, we give back not just a dividend of the natural growth, but a great value we have ourselves added to it.

But the celebration of Shavuot became almost exclusively concentrated on the aspect of the festival commemorating the revelation on Mt. Sinai and in the liturgy it is called, "The Season of the Giving of Our Torah." Nowhere in the Bible is this date explicitly given, and it is deduced by calculation based upon the narrative in Exodus 19:1-16.

The ancient rabbis engaged in some fascinating 'pilpul' in order to fix the date. It was their firm belief that a date certain for the contract between God and the people Israel must exist and be related to Torah text. This became crucial after the destruction of the temple. Just as the ancient Shavuot meant people took God's grain and shaped it into bread, so Shavuot since the Temple fell has meant that human beings took God's Torah, shaped it into 'midsash' and offered the Torah back to God.

The liturgy includes the Book of Ruth because it mentions the barley and wheat harvests and also because its heroine is a proselyte who accepted the Torah.

The agricultural aspect of the feast is stressed by the customs of decorating the synagogue with plants and greenery, and of eating dairy foods instead of meat.

Under the influence of the Kabbalah, a custom there is the custom of sitting up all night on the festival and reading excerpts from the Bible and rabbinic texts (Tikkun).

Important Notice!

The location of Shabbat services on May 6 and May 13 (Candidates Nights) has been changed to 201 Caselli St. (corner of Danvers), the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints.

Candlelight March

An informal delegation of members of the Congregation plan on marching in the Monday, May 2 Candlelight March as a personal and group expression of our concern about AIDS. Marchers are scheduled to set off at 7:30 p.m. from Castro and Market for the Federal Building, which was chosen as a destination to emphasize the need for Federal funding of AIDS research projects. Please join your friends in making this march a powerful statement.

Women's Havurah to Meet

The next meeting of the Women's Havurah will be on Monday, May 23 at 6 p.m. If you would like to be part of the planning and decision-making—part of "making exciting things happen—please attend. We not only accomplish a great deal, we *always* have a wonderful evening! The "shalom mat" will be out just for you at Nancy's house, 3976A 25th St., in San Francisco.

Tikkun Shavuot

It is a Jewish tradition to spend the first night of Shavuot in study and prayer. In keeping with this tradition, the Ritual Committee will sponsor a *Tikkun Shavuot*, a study session, on Tuesday, May 17, at the home of Mike Rankin, 755 29th Avenue, in San Francisco. A brief evening service will begin at 7:30 p.m., followed by a "milchedich" (dairy) potluck dinner. After dinner, Daniel Chesir will lead a discussion of Torah until midnight. Please join us for this event. If you would like further information, call Leslie at 929-1444.

Jeanette Gurevitch

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
י' 1 Lag Ba-Omer Picnic/Softball	י"ט 2 AIDS Candlelight March	י"ג 3	י"ד 4	י"ה 5	י"ז 6 Candidates Night I	י"ח 7
י"א 8	י"ב 9 Va'ad Meeting	י"ג 10 Newsletter Deadline	י"ד 11	י"ה 12	י"ז 13 Rosh Chodesh Candidates Night II	י"ח 14 Women's Havurah Blood Drive
י"ג 15 Congregational Meeting/Elections	י"ד 16	י"ה 17 Tikkun Shavuot	י"ז 18 Shavuot	י"ח 19 Shavuot	י"ז 20 Judy Sloan	י"ח 21
י"ז 22	י"ח 23 Social Program Committee Women's Havurah Committee Meeting	י"ט 24	י"ז 25	י"ח 26	י"ט 27	י"ז 28
י"ז 29	י"ח 30	י"ט 31	Services are held each Friday night at 8:15 at the Jewish Community Center, 3200 California (at Presidio) in San Francisco.			

Ritual Calendar

Friday,
May 6
Torah: Behar-BeHukkotai, Lev. 25:1-27:34
Haftarah: Jeremiah 16:19-17:14
Peter Hayn, Services
Candidates Night I

Friday,
May 13
Torah: Bamidbar, Num. 1:1-4:20
Haftarah: Hosea 2:1-22
Ellyn Bloomfield and Marc Lipschutz,
services
Candidates Night II

Friday,
May 20
Shavuot Celebration
Torah: Naso, Num. 4:21-7:89
Haftarah: Judges 13:2-25
Special Reading: Selections from
Megillat Ruth; Torah Service
Joanne Woolf and Garry Koenigsberg,
Services

Friday,
May 27
Torah: BeHa'alotkha, Num. 8:1-12:16
Haftarah: Zechariah 2:14-4:7
Leslie Bergson, Services

Special Program Set For Friday, May 20

FOLLOWING THE ONEG on May 20, we have scheduled a very special event. Judy Sloan, an actress, comedienne and clown, will visit with us and perform her one-woman show of Jewish life and lore.

As "Sophie," an elderly, lively, Jewish grandmother, Judy Sloan comments on everything from her family tree to the perils of nuclear power. The stories and routines of close-minded relatives, intermarriage, bickering families and the struggle to make good as immigrants in America while relatives are stranded in the "old country," are all true, learned from elderly Jewish women.

Additionally, Ms. Sloan transforms herself into other characters, juggling, singing, and delivering serio-comic monologues on the "unfunnies of life."

This show, which has been performed throughout New England, New York and Florida, has received favorable comments from the *New York Times* and other publications. She has also performed on CBS-TV. This will be Judy Sloan's first visit to the West Coast and we are honored to present her to you.

Eighth International Conference

THE 8th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE of Gay and Lesbian Jews is scheduled for August 4 through 7 in Miami, Florida, hosted by Congregation Etz Chaim. The word "Miami" when transliterated into Hebrew becomes "Mi-Ami" and means "Who Are My People?" This fortunate coincidence provides a theme for the conference which asks, "Who Are My People?"—as Jews, as Gays and Lesbians, and as responsible adults.

This year's conferees will be afforded the opportunity to participate in new, creative workshops: "The Future of the Gay/Lesbian Jew in the Brave New World," "Tradition—The Glue That Keeps Us Together," and "Do Your Parents Know Where You Are?" are just some of the topics to be covered.

A full schedule of religious services is planned, including: Friday night Shabbat Dinner and Services, to be held at Temple Israel of Greater Miami, and Havdallah under the stars. Special services have been scheduled for Saturday morning.

The Conference will be held in the new 17-story Holiday Inn at Bricknell Point, located on the shores of Biscayne Bay. It is ideally situated near all major attractions. For a complete information and registration package, write to Congregation Etz Chaim, Conference Committee, 19094 West Dixie Highway, North Miami Beach, Florida, 33180. Please include your zip code and telephone number.

Contributions

The publication of the names of contributors to Sha'ar Zahav originally scheduled to begin in this issue has been delayed until next month. All contributors will be listed unless otherwise requested. Contributions of any denomination are gratefully accepted and acknowledged.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Classified Ads are \$1.00 for up to 20 words, additional words at 5c each. The *Forward* reserves the right to reject any ad for reasons of taste. Place your classified ad by sending in your ad with the correct fee to Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, PO Box 5640, San Francisco, 94101, att: Forward. Please note, this column is for the use of members only.

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May Happy Birthdays!

2	Ted Mendonca	17	Janice Macomber
5	Cathy Airola	17	Ed Gabay
6	Joyce Amburgey	18	David Stein
6	Henry Carrey	21	Jerry Rosenstein
12	Herb Cohn	22	Paul Herbert
15	Arnie Jackson	29	Eric Keitel

May Yahrzeits

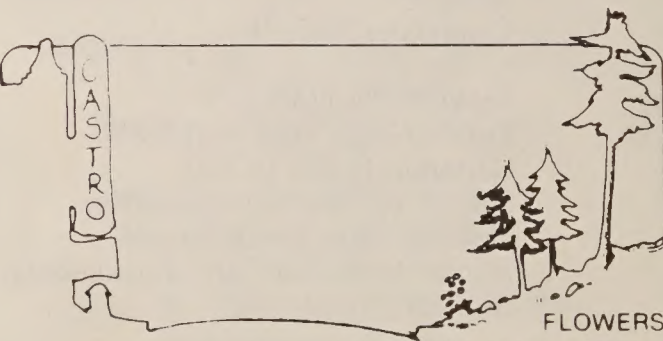
1	Benjamin Katz, grandfather of Bruce Katz
10	Max P., father of Hal P.
15	(3 Sivan) Tewel B., father of Joe B.
22	(10 Sivan) David Radovsky, grandfather of Laurie Radovsky
25	Rose Weiss, grandmother of Jaya Salzman
25	(13 Sivan) Rebecca Blossom Bornstein, mother of Louis Bornstein and grandmother of Richard Bornstein
26	Ida Parker, mother of Harold Parker
27	Carolyn Drew Morris, grandmother of Laurie Radovsky
29	Cliff Olson, friend of Joy Becker
30	Mary Thal, mother of Sam Thal



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